

HEARTS N' PARKS: 2ND P—PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

Local programs are the lifeblood of Hearts N' Parks. It is through the connection of local programs with participants that heart-healthy information can be shared and lead to heart-healthy behavior. Programs come in many shapes and sizes. Through Hearts N' Parks, you can either create new programs or put new information and activities into existing ones. You can move people from knowledge to action by starting from where they are and supporting them as they move to a heart-healthy lifestyle.

PROGRAM VARIETIES

There can be a number of variations within program offerings. Two of those relate to whether programs are new or existing, and whether or not the focus of a program is specifically upon heart-healthy behavior. This results in a framework for program possibilities:

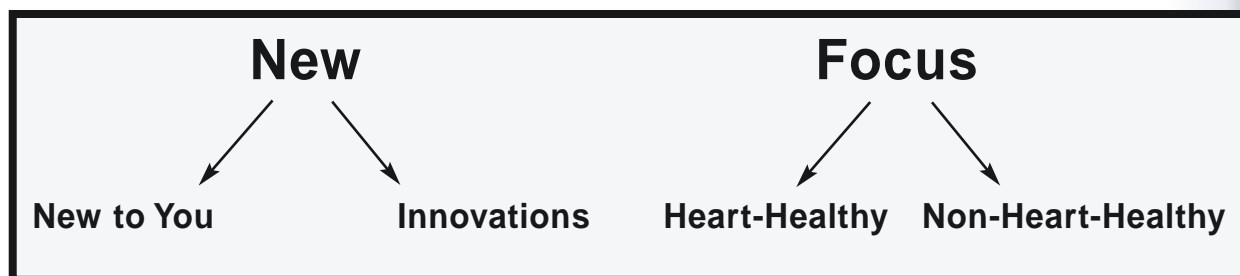
New to You. If you cosponsor a healthy cooking program for the first time with the Cooperative Extension Service, it may not be new to your area but will certainly be new to your department and possibly new to your

target groups. If your department has never offered programs or activities on healthy eating or managing weight and diet, that would be another example.

Innovations. The only limit here is imagination. The Albemarle (North Carolina) Parks and Recreation Department partnered with a local hospital to create a series of evening strolls in various locations in the county. Residents visited places they hadn't been recently while engaging in a physical activity, meeting old or making new friends, and being screened for high blood pressure.

Heart-Healthy. Programs with a major emphasis on physical activity or learning about healthful eating. Examples: aerobics, volleyball, low-fat cooking class.

Non-Heart-Healthy. Programs that do not focus on physical activity skills or participation or nutrition or weight loss. Examples: arts and crafts, day camp, bridge club, etc.



Resources



Three science-based health/recreation resources include the curriculum from the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH), *JumpSTART*, and *JumpSTART Afterschool*.

CATCH was a multisite study that demonstrated the effectiveness of school health education for motivating heart-healthy behavior in elementary school age children. CATCH's field tested materials include:

1) a physical education curriculum with lesson plans and a set of more than 350, 5x8 cards showing fun, easy-to-teach activities; 2) heart-healthy classroom curriculum with family components for grades 3, 4, and 5; and 3) an eat smart school cafeteria program guide. The CATCH physical education component offers a blend of moderate to vigorous physical activities, sports adaptations, and suggestions for hula hoops, jump ropes, and parachutes. The CATCH program offers a successful blend of physical education, classroom curriculum, nutrition awareness, student-directed activities, and P.E. equipment designed to promote and maintain cardiovascular health in children, grades K–5.

CATCH Recreation is an adaptation of the original curriculum developed specifically for park and recreation personnel and provides hundreds of youth activities promoting physical activity. A special recreation leaders guide complements the program material and supports the Hearts N' Parks program. All of the CATCH materials can be obtained from Flaghouse at <http://www.flaghouse.com> or at (800) 793-7900.

JumpSTART is a school-based program adapted from CATCH developed by NHLBI and NRPA in collaboration with *Scholastic* magazine that provides teachers with a variety of ways to include physical activity and healthy eating components into their language arts, social studies, math, and science classes. Another component to *JumpSTART* is the back-pack stuffers on heart-healthy behaviors for children to bring home to their parents. The target age group is third through sixth grade. *JumpSTART* is available from NHLBI at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/other/jumpstrt.htm>.

JumpSTART Afterschool is a program also developed by NHLBI and NRPA with assistance from the National Recreation Foundation to help children and youth get active, have fun, and be healthy. The booklet (also available in Spanish) includes a series of activities selected to augment current after-school programming. The activities encourage physical activity and recreation as well as heart-healthy eating habits by using creative discovery techniques that are applicable to indoor and outdoor environments. The target age group is third through sixth grade. Information on *JumpSTART Afterschool* is available on the NRPA Web site www.activeparks.org under programs and partners.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

Whether your department decides to create new programs or continue existing ones, there are a number of techniques that can be used to make all department programs a part of Hearts N' Parks.

Information and Knowledge Infusion

One approach that the North Carolina pilot sites found particularly effective was to infuse knowledge and activity into existing programs. The pilot sites did this both with programs that

had a heart-healthy focus and those that did not. Some of the ways you can infuse information and build knowledge within programs include:

Existing Programs (heart-healthy focus)

- Have participants in exercise classes monitor their pulse periodically.
- Suggest that participants in summer day camps substitute healthier foods for high-fat snacks.



To give you an idea of the wealth of information available within *JumpSTART* and *CATCH Recreation*:

Snack-vertising (*JumpSTART Afterschool*)

- Objective:** To use persuasive writing techniques to spread nutrition information.
- Benefits:** Reinforces participants' knowledge of heart-healthy food choices.
- Equipment:** Construction paper, posterboard, markers and other art supplies, tape recorder, and video camera.
- Directions:** Have groups of kids think of interesting and fun ways (e.g., billboard, magazine, or TV advertisement) to 'advertise' their snacks, and convince others of their heart-healthy properties.

The Great Alphabet Hunt (*JumpSTART Afterschool*)

- Objective:** Reinforce language arts and spelling.
- Benefit:** Environmental appreciation.
- Directions:** As you walk or jog, look for objects whose first letters spell out the alphabet in order (i.e., acorn, bird, cloud). See how far you can get in a given time or distance.

Go Fitness Fast Games 2 (*CATCH Recreation*)

- Activity:** Elbow Tag *Grade Level:* 3–5
- Equipment:** Four cones, scarves, or objects to identify children that are "it."
- Skills Emphasized:** Fleeing, dodging, chasing, running.
- Organization:** Designate boundaries and reentry task zone; designate one of five kids to be "it"; kids scatter.
- Description:** On signal, children that are "it" try to tag the others. At any time the other children may find a partner and link elbows. For 10 seconds, while elbows are linked, kids are safe from the person chasing them (count out loud). While linked, pairs should continue to walk. When participants are tagged, they go to the reentry task zone and complete the designated reentry task (e.g., 10 jumping jacks or 10 sit-ups).

Go Activity Aerobic Games 5 (*CATCH Recreation*)

- Activity:** Circulation *Grade Level:* 3–4
- Equipment:** Bean bag or similar safe object.
- Skills Emphasized:** Various locomotor movements.
- Organization:** Children form large circle in an open space with bean bag in the center. Divide the class into two teams: half are Team A, the other Team B. Players on each team are numbered 1–15.
- Description:** On signal, all kids walk in the same direction around the circle. Call out a number. The player with the same number on each team runs out and tries to take the bean bag back to their group on the perimeter of the circle. If a player succeeds, that team gets 2 points. If the player that took the bean bag is tagged by an opposing player before getting back to the circle, the other team gets one point. All other players continue to walk in a circle.

- Expose program participants to myths about exercise, such as the need to engage in vigorous activity to have cardiovascular benefit.

Existing Programs (non-heart-healthy focus)

- Have participants complete health quizzes, such as *Check Your High Blood Pressure Prevention I.Q.* or *Check Your Healthy Heart I.Q.*, (in reproducible section), so they can transform information into knowledge about their own health.
- Have instructors begin or end class sessions with a heart-healthy tip from such resources as “Nutrition Tip Sheets” or *Exercise and Your Heart*.
- Teach participants a new skill, such as how to read a food label for fat and sugar content, or how to determine a “moderate” level of physical activity.

Raising the Potential

Another strategy for infusing Hearts N’ Parks into local programs, particularly existing ones, is to raise the potential of programs for helping the project reach its goals. There are a couple of ways to do this. Programs with a captive audience over an extended period of time, such as afterschool, daycare, or latchkey programs, summer camps or playgrounds, adaptive or therapeutic recreation, and senior citizen meal programs and clubs provide opportunities for providing heart-healthy information.

And take advantage of commemorations, such as American Heart Month, National Nutrition Month, or National Cookout Month. These can be used to help people boost their activity levels or learn to prepare healthier meals. Some of the national organizations on the NHLBI partner’s list sponsor such annual events. These events include:

■ **February** is American Heart Month.

■ **March** is National Nutrition Month.

■ **May** is National High Blood Pressure Education Month.

■ **September** is National Cholesterol Education Month.

■ **November** is National Diabetes Month.

The NRPA also has a number of national program partners that sponsor events that could work well for you.

■ **May** is USA Tennis Month *and* National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.

■ **July** is Recreation and Parks Month *and* National Cookout Month.

Hands-On Activity

Emphasize “doing.” The value of a healthy eating tip is enhanced with a copy of a related heart-healthy recipe.

Adapt Traditional Activities

Substitute soccer for softball to get more participants actively involved in the game. Frozen tag involves more physical activity than Red Light, Green Light. Serve bite-sized snacks at camp or social meetings. Encourage concessionaires to provide a wider range of heart-healthy snacks, meals, and beverages.

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

Being exposed to a fact sheet about a healthy diet is not the same as knowing how to shop for one. Knowing how to shop for healthier foods is not the same as choosing to eat those foods. People pass through a number of stages from learning about the importance of CVD until they attain a heart-healthy lifestyle. We can help them move along that continuum:

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

Information → Knowledge → Intention → Activity → Lifestyle

SOS

Signs of Success

Many of the North Carolina communities utilized existing programs that involved participants over a period of time.

Day Camps and Playgrounds

- Mecklenburg County incorporated healthy snacks into its programs.
- Garner Parks and Recreation focused on fitness and reading food labels during one week at Camp Geko.
- Roanoke Rapids taught nutrition basics to children ages 4 through 6 at the FLIP (Fun for Little Interested People) Camp.



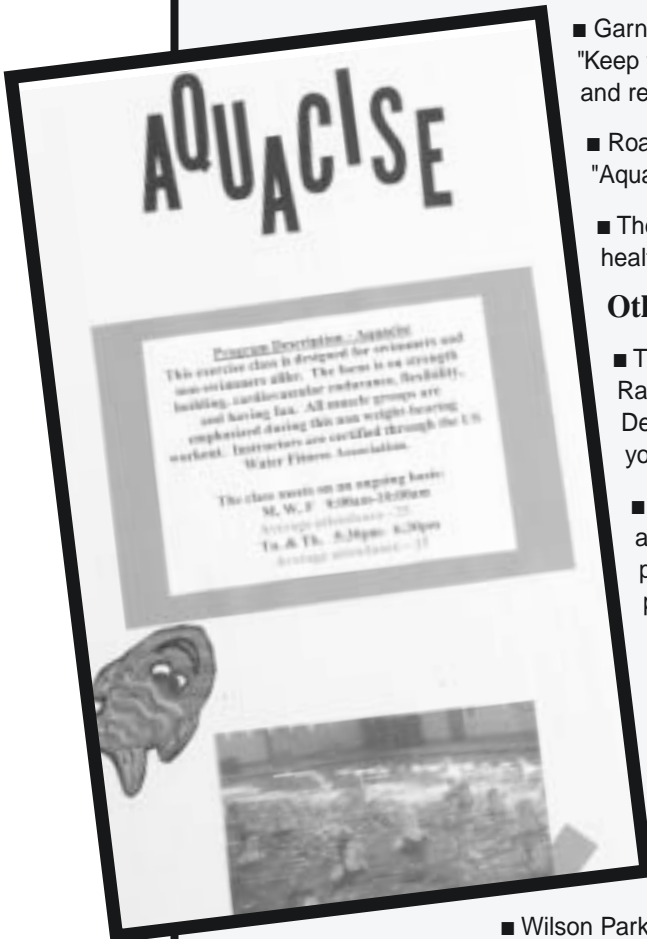
Senior Programs

- Garner Parks and Recreation revamped an existing program, calling it "Keep the Beat-Circle Yourself in Health" and had seniors keep a journal and receive credit for prizes as an incentive.
- Roanoke Rapids incorporated heart-healthy information into its "Aquacise" program for seniors.
- The mall-walking program in Mecklenburg County provided heart-healthy information and activities.

Other Programs

- The Summer Youth Basketball League, a joint venture of the Raleigh Police Department and the Parks and Recreation Department, incorporated physical activity testing and offered the youths fruit and a sports drink.
- Hickory included information and activities at Kindergym, a preschool physical activity program.
- Winston-Salem featured heart-healthy activities as part of its Weed and Seed Summer Youth Academy, with healthy snacks, educational sessions, and instruction in physical activity.

- Wilson Parks and Recreation incorporated information and instruction in both their summer sports day camp and its weightlifting program for adults.



Providing people with information about the value of dietary changes and physical activity may not be enough to persuade them to make changes in how they live. People know that they should be more active or eat healthier meals, but they don't always act on this knowledge.

Offer Opportunities

The goal of Hearts N' Parks is to move people along from having information to acting upon it. Three ways to accomplish this progression are as follows: The first is to provide people with more opportunities to become involved in programs. Think of these as introductory versions of your programs that are designed to attract people who may lack the time, money, confidence, or level of commitment needed to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Possibilities include:

- Offer **A Taste** of one or more of your programs. That is, offer "miniclasses" in the heart-healthy programs currently offered by your department.
- Offer invitations that are **Good for One Free Session**. That is, invite people to attend a heart-healthy class at no charge.
- Hold a **Get Started** series of programs. These could include "getting started" on shopping for healthier food, "getting started" on healthier ways to eat fast foods, or "getting started" on reducing fat eaten during meals.
- Hold a **Special Event**. For example, sponsor a "Get Ready for Summer Fun" event where people can try out the various physical activities offered by your department.
- Hold an **Open House**. At one of your facilities, include sessions on heart-healthy behavior as part of an open house.
- **Reach Out**. Sometimes the people who are most in need of involvement in heart-healthy

Do you know?



There are various ways to infuse information, knowledge, and activity into existing efforts, such as:

Information

Low-fat foods should be included in your daily diet.

Reduce amount of fat and sugar in snacks.

It is important to warm up before physical activity.

Activity

Cooking demonstration and sampling from 4–6 p.m., when parents pick up children.

Serve a healthy snack at camp with a "mini" reminder about why it's good for you.

Ministretching and warm-up lesson at drop-in volleyball.

Skill/Knowledge

Low-fat food tastes good and is easy to prepare.

Can recognize a snack that tastes good and is good for you.

Practice appropriate warm-up techniques.

programs are those who are most difficult to reach by traditional methods. Don't wait for them to come to you, find a way to go to them where they are most comfortable and accessible.

Breaking Barriers

The second way to help people progress from knowledge to action is to help people break down their personal barriers to adopting heart-healthy behavior. These barriers may include a long list of "don'ts," as in:

SOS

Signs of Success



Some North Carolina communities created new programs as part of the Hearts N' Parks projects:



- Albemarle Parks and Recreation teamed with a local hospital to create “walk about” programs that transported residents to different parts of Albemarle County and provided opportunities for health education and free screening of blood pressure and blood glucose as part of the evening out.
- Staff from the Madison-Mayodan Recreation Department created a special version of Hearts N' Parks for sixth to eighth graders. The program included fun, lifetime physical activity skill opportunities as well as games, such as “design your personal pizza.”
- The Smithfield Parks Department collaborated with the county health department and a fitness center to create a 6-week senior physical activity program that offered screening for blood pressure, cholesterol, and body fat.



Don't have the... *time*

... *money*

... *ability*

Don't know ... *how*

... *if I can*

... *if I'll like it*

Don't want to ... *look/feel silly or stupid*

... *invest too much time, money,
or effort in something I may
not like or be able to do*

Lifestyle Behavior Support

The third way to help people progress from knowledge to action is to help them maintain their new lifestyle. There are ways to do that, such as:

- **Special events** that reinforce social support for people with similar interests and goals.

- **Programs** that help reinforce their progress.
- **Recognition** of milestones achieved or continued participation.
- **Prizes as incentives.** Offer people some kind of small gift or giveaway.
- **Suggest Alternatives.** People sometimes tire of the same activities and the same heart-healthy recipes. Suggest to treadmill fans that they might enjoy cycling or hiking. Distribute new heart-healthy recipes and meal ideas. Fight against boredom and repetitiveness as a reason for sliding back into old habits.
- **“Welcome Back-We Missed You.”** There are always people who slip out of newly acquired patterns. Often they feel bad about it but think they can't start anew. Make sure you try to get them back.



The following excerpt from *The Practical Guide to the Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults* suggests ways to respond to some of the standard reasons why people don't engage in physical activity.

I don't have time to exercise.

Physical activity does take time, but only about 1 hour per week of vigorous activity can greatly benefit your heart, lungs, muscles, and weight. Consider the amount of time you spend watching TV. Many forms of physical activity can be done while watching TV, such as riding an exercise bike or using handweights.

I don't like to exercise.

You have bad memories of doing situps or running in high school, sweating, puffing, and panting. Now we know that you can get plenty of gain without pain. Activities you already do, such as gardening and walking, can improve your health, so just do more of the activities you like.

I don't have the energy to be more active.

Once you become a little more active, you should have more energy. As you progress, daily tasks will seem easier.

Source: *The Practical Guide to the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults*. NIH Pub. No. 00-4084

- **Goal Attainment.** You can help people understand that behavior change isn't the easiest thing to do but that setting measurable goals that are reasonable can help them maintain new behavior.
- **Barrier Bashing.** Continue to provide information and program alternatives to assist in breaking through barriers to physical activity and healthy eating.
- **Social Support Alternatives.** Facilitate the organization of walking clubs, cooking clubs, dining-out clubs, or any other way that people can help one another.

FROM PROGRAMS TO PRACTICES

It is likely that your department has provided information and oriented decision-makers and staff. You've adapted existing programs and created new ones. But organizations must also adopt Hearts N' Parks into their lifestyle.

Some possibilities include:

- **Mission Statement.** Include the health and well-being of department employees as part of the department's mission statement.
- **Vision Statement.** Make a heart-healthy, active community a mainstay of your department's vision for the future.
- **Planning.** Be sure that issues related to heart-healthy behavior are discussed in your department's strategic plan.
- **Communication.** Include statistics, information, and awareness-building messages about community health and physical fitness in annual reports, newsletters, brochures, press releases, and other forms of communication.
- **Personnel.** Staff orientation and staff training should emphasize the importance of heart-healthy behavior.
- **Resources.** Link budget requests, grant proposals, and fundraising efforts to the role of your programs and services in promoting community health.

SOS

Signs of Success



Fitting Activity Into Your Schedule

Try walking before going to work or school. Or maybe you prefer evenings. Even a few minutes of walking counts. Try to build up to 30 minutes a day. You can walk whenever it is convenient for you, or you can take an aerobics class instead. Whatever works for you is fine. There is no one right time of day to exercise. The important thing is that you try to be more active.

Try to think about the little things that you can do to add more activity to your daily life. For instance, take the stairs instead of the elevator at work, park farther away from the entrance to the mall, or walk instead of driving to work or shopping. These little things add up and are easy to fit into your schedule.

Source: *The Practical Guide to the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults*. NIH Pub. No. 00-4084

- **Policy and Procedures.** Review, and modify if necessary, policies and procedures to ensure safe, convenient, and equitable access to areas, facilities, programs, and services that contribute to individual and community health.
- **Advocate.** Assume the role of advocate for physical activity facilities, such as bike paths, walking or jogging paths, lighted facilities for evening use, and indoor facilities for exercise during bad weather.

SOS

Signs of Success

Arlington County Vision Statement

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources is vital to the enrichment of Arlington as a vibrant and enjoyable community.

Arlington County Mission Statement

We work to make Arlington the happiest, healthiest place to live, work, and play through dynamic programs, public spaces, and collaborations that:

- Provide healthy and fun recreation, sport, and leisure choices.
- Cultivate, maintain, and protect natural and cultural resources.
- Provide opportunities for creative expression.



Countdown Checklist: 2nd P—Programs

GETTING STARTED

- ___ Involve staff in the identification of heart-healthy and non-heart-healthy programs that might lend themselves to heart-healthy activities.
- ___ Have staff identify resources within those programs that could be used for a Hearts N' Parks focus.
- ___ Identify ways in which program activities could become more “hands-on” heart-healthy or adapted to support more heart-healthy behavior.
- ___ Create a plan adding Hearts N' Parks information and activities to those programs.
- ___ Make plans for staff training and program modifications.

MOVING FORWARD

- ___ Identify high-potential programs, such as after-school, day camp, or senior meals, where Hearts N' Parks might be incorporated.
- ___ Plan specific activities and techniques for these high-potential programs.
- ___ Identify possibilities for incorporating national observances in your program schedule.
- ___ Create a schedule for implementing these programs.

KEEP THE BEAT

- ___ Offer special events/opportunities to introduce people to heart-healthy behavior and programs.
- ___ Ask staff to identify possible barriers to participation in programs and suggest ways to break down those barriers.
- ___ Identify reproducible materials that could be used to encourage people to move from knowledge to action.
- ___ Create recognition or incentive programs to sustain the involvement of participants.
- ___ Offer programs or activities to attract people who lapse from a heart-healthy lifestyle.
- ___ Provide decision-makers in your department with ways in which they can help to make that happen. Share with them the suggestions in “From Programs to Practices.”

STAFF TRAINING/MEETING OUTLINES

Adding Information and Activity

People Involved: Program and front-line staff

Time Allotted: 2 hours

Goals:

1. Identify existing programs where heart-healthy information and activity can be added.
2. Identify resources that can be used for this purpose.
3. Create a schedule and system for doing so.
4. Identify high potential programs for heart-healthy behavior.
5. Brainstorm ways to incorporate heart-healthy activities into these programs.

Materials and Resources:

- List of current programs (Program Worksheet, page 42)
- Program plan form (Program Worksheet, page 42)
- Copy of reproducible materials

Suggested Topics and Activities:

- Review differences between new and existing programs and heart-healthy and non-heart-healthy programs.
- Overview of ways to move knowledge about heart health to existing programs.
- Individual or small group: identify existing programs where heart-healthy information and activity could be added.
- Share list of programs identified.
- Individual or small group: create a plan and schedule for integrating heart-healthy information and activity.
- Group brainstorming: possible high potential programs to be incorporated into Hearts N' Parks.
- Wrap-up: questions and comments.

STAFF TRAINING/MEETING OUTLINES

High Potential Program Possibilities

People Involved: Program supervisors and programmers

Time Allotted: 2 hours

Goals:

1. Identify high-potential programs for involvement with Hearts N' Parks.
2. Identify possible national programs or celebrations for incorporation into the department's offerings.
3. Develop plans and activities for both high potential and national programs.
4. Create a schedule for implementation of these programs.

Materials and Resources: Information from this section

Suggested Topics and Activities:

- Share progress and challenges on incorporation of heart-healthy information into programs.
- Make adjustments and make plans for continuation.

High Potential and Profile Programs

- Group brainstorming: List potential programs for both high potential and profile; refer to information in this section on those two areas, if needed.
- Group decision: On the basis of department criteria—that is, resources, number of people reached, ease of access to target group, etc., decide to place greater-than-average emphasis on heart-healthy behavior in several existing programs.
- Program plans: Identify one or more national programs or celebrations which the department plans to incorporate into its offerings. Develop an action plan.

Wrap-up

- Questions and comments.
- Set a date and time to reconvene to finalize plans for incorporation.



Program Worksheet



Overall Goal: If more than one, indicate priority by designating the first goal as #1 and also check secondary goals.

___ Add heart-healthy information and activities to existing programs

___ Target high potential or national programs

___ Move people from information to action

___ Reach potential participants

___ Support heart-healthy lifestyle

___ Identify possibilities for partnerships

___ Utilize opportunities for building public visibility

Program List:

List each of the major programs or services under your supervision.

Mark as follows under the heading **Designation:**

● strong possibility to reach goal(s)

X possible alternative for goal(s) attainment

List suggestions for possible information, activities, or modifications.

Program

Designation

Possible Activities

Designate programs selected for Hearts N' Parks, along with major goal or focus and types of activities.

Program

Major Goal/Focus

Activities

Designate actions that need to be taken to implement the Hearts N' Parks program. Include due date and person responsible.

Action

By When

By Whom

Frequently Asked Questions



1 We have a tight budget. How can we implement Heart N' Parks without going over budget?

Work to achieve some flexibility in your program so that costly rearranging or replanning is minimized; try to be creative. For example, as part of its Hearts N' Parks program, the Winston-Salem (North Carolina) Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center to provide blood pressure and cholesterol checks for adults in a "Healthy Strider" mall-walking program. The medical center used a storefront in the mall as a place to provide walkers with healthy snacks and information. This joining of resources and facilities enabled both groups to keep costs down while reaching out to a larger segment of the community.

Obtain educational materials and program ideas from the Web and see the 4th P starting on page 65 for information about forming partnerships.

2 How many participants can participate?

There is no set number, but it is better for evaluation purposes to start off with a small group (15–30) and allow the program to grow.

